

The City on a Hill?—U.S. Policy Decisions and the Insurgency in Iraq

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Introduction

“The eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through-out the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and professors for God’s sake; we shall shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us ‘til we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.”

—John Winthrop^[1]

U.S. policy toward the Middle East is interpreted as biased by many Muslims. Although the United States has attempted to move beyond the ideal of America representing the “City on the Hill” in the eyes of the world: that is to say the example for other states to emulate, particularly those in the Second and Third Worlds, the United States has not divorced the American ideal. That ideal is rooted in our constitution-based government that establishes rights and freedoms for U.S. citizens that are foreign to many. There is a symbiotic link between U.S. policies toward the Middle East and the increasing insurgency against U.S. forces and organizations operating in the region.

Some academics have argued that U.S. policies may not achieve intended outcomes based on social and cultural background. They say that trying to implement democracy in the Middle East is bound to fail since the principles of Islam and democracy run counter to each other. Such Orientalist idealism has found expression in books and articles like Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* and Bernard Lewis’s *What Went Wrong* and “Roots of Muslim Rage.”^[2]

These publications do identify that there are some inherent flaws in the Muslim community such as the issue of contamination (when culture and religion collide). However, these publications generalize and oversimplify the myriad of differences that comprise the Muslim world. Because of this failure they lead to theories based on simplistic deductions (failing to be a pious Muslim, returning to the ways of the prophet) drawn from societal dogmas (roles of men and women, Islam as the improved final version to Christianity, misinterpretation of *jihad* and *itihad*) as the

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casus belli of unrest in the Middle East and thus their resultant theories fail to encompass the panacea for the shortcomings of Islam. Bin Laden and other Islamists would argue that the Middle East does not need democracy. What it needs is for the states in the region to implement *shari'a* law and for all Muslims to follow a certain interpretation of both the Quran and the *hadith*. Proponents on both sides argue that cultural, social, and religious incompatibilities at the societal level will lead to a clash of civilizations; partly as a failure of states to define its borders along societal lines, and attempts by strong elements within society of the existing borders to preserve their own culture.[3]

American policies are perceived as biased because they are contradictory in the eyes of many Muslims and occidentals and as such serve to further exacerbate the increasing “clashing of civilizations.” For example, U.S. policies are believed to allow Israel an open door to pursue technologically and socially expansionist policies in order to attack and oppress Muslims while preventing states like Iran and Syria from gaining such advances in order to defend themselves. Consequently, it is this perceived bias that is providing insurgent and Islamist leaders the necessary legitimacy on the world and Muslim stage. A consequence of such decisions by the United States is the increased social mobilization of Muslims; wherein, this bias has successfully projected Islamist views of those like Osama Bin Laden which, in turn, have resulted in the uniting of more and more Muslims against the West. The United States has yet to realize that it is no longer the “City on the Hill” in the eyes of many states, particularly those in the Middle East. Therefore, its policies toward the Middle East require an immediate shift toward a strategy that will deal more effectively with the region as a whole.

The focus of this article is to identify evidence to support the perception that American policies are contributing to the increasing violence against the United States and contributing to the rise in the insurgency that plagues coalition forces and the Iraqi general population today. I argue that the perceived bias of U.S. policies against the Middle East is a direct cause of the increased violence seen in Iraq among others in the region. This paper discusses three policy choices made by the Bush Administration: the invasion itself, the decision to de-Ba'athify the Iraqi government and, finally, the classification and treatment of detainees. In order to address the problems facing the United States in Iraq today one must first gain insight into the event that started it all: the decision to invade Iraq.

Reaping what has been Sown

The Iraq of 2006 is a microcosm of America's larger Middle East problem, specifically, a weak government whose tenuous hold on power is based, in part, on the support provided by the United States. The war of 2003 may have put America into this unenviable position but it is just one decision among many that appear to be working to ensure the future of U.S.-Middle East relations will look very much like the past. The decision to invade Iraq was not the beginning of the United States' troubles in the Middle East. Going back to the inter-war period, the West has been perceived by many in the region as an untrustworthy actor on the international stage. As the leader of the West, the United States must bear the weight of this history. From the McMahon Correspondence to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, through the Balfour Declaration and on to the San Remo and Cairo Conferences, Western decisions and actions related to the issue of Jewish and Palestinian land has been a driving force behind this lack of trust[4]

Since the Palestinian issue has resonance with the larger Muslim community, it has proven to be a viable pathway for fundamentalist movements and insurgencies to tap into[5] and employ with much success. Bin Laden has referred, in the past, to the West as being part of a “Zionist-Crusader alliance” that is the avowed enemy of the *ulema*. [6] Zarqawi has said that Iraq is not the goal of his movement as well because he has his sites set on other places such as Jerusalem [7] Strategic decisions such as the one to invade Iraq in order to develop democracy in the Middle East combined with the negative historical perspective already held by much of the Muslim

population toward the West, have contributed to, as opposed to eradicated, the vicious cycle of violence and extremism that plagues the Iraq of 2006.

In 2005, the Bush Administration published a National Strategy for Victory in Iraq. In part, it says that democratizing Iraq is in the United States' national interest because it will make the United States "more certain of its future politically, by bolstering democratic reformers—and the prospects for peaceful, democratic governments—in a region that for decades has been a source for instability and stagnation ..." and "... economically, by facilitating progressive reform in the region and depriving terrorists control over a hub of the world's economy."[\[8\]](#) While this may appear to be morally just, it does not address the real issue. The question is not whether democracy is good but rather is it the United States' place to topple governments it does not agree with in order to build new ones that it does?

Starting in the 1600s with the Peace of Westphalia, state sovereignty has been the key tenet upon which international affairs have been conducted. The UN Charter builds on the agreement made at Westphalia. It states, that "the organization is based in principle on the sovereign equality of all its members ..." and that "... [n]othing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state."[\[9\]](#)

In addition to violating international law and the acknowledged centrality historically afforded to the premise of state sovereignty, the invasion of Iraq by the United States provided America's enemies with the singularly most important need an insurgency requires: a cause. "With a cause, the insurgent has a formidable, if tangible, asset that he can progressively transform into concrete strength."[\[10\]](#) The "imperialist" action by the United States, in the minds of the Islamists and others, showed the world that America did not stand for true democracy and that democratic principles and ideals such as civil rights would fall by the wayside in favor of security concerns. The war made it evident to many in the Muslim world that short-term U.S. security was more important than long-term democratic reform for the people of the Middle East. Due to the critical nature of this decision to the insurgent's cause, that is where this paper will begin.

Iraq: Al Qaeda's Golden Opportunity

In 2003 the Bush Administration launched what it called a "preemptive war" with Iraq as a means of prosecuting the "Global War on Terror." The decision to topple Saddam Hussein's regime instead of utilizing the military forces in the region to hunt Al Qaeda's key leaders (bin Laden and al-Zawahiri) in the territory around the Afghanistan-Pakistan border resulted in a myriad of negative consequences, the worst of which, to date, seems to be that it breathed new life into the dying Islamist movement. Even if the current U.S. Administration did not understand the implications of its decision, the leadership of Al Qaeda certainly did. "Their avowed strategy is to oblige the United States to invade Muslim countries in the hope that it will become overstretched and bogged down there. Terrorists know that they cannot stir up the religious feelings of the Muslim masses in the absence of a direct occupation."[\[11\]](#) This decision became just another example in a long line of interventionist policies that have plagued the United States in its dealings with the Muslim world.

Kepel states that by 2001 that Islamism was in serious decline throughout the Middle East: "[a]t the dawn of the new millennium, the initiative was with those regimes that had emerged victorious from confrontation with the Islamist movement, whether they did so by armed violence or by peaceful cooption."[\[12\]](#) This was true for a number of reasons. The first of which was that the Islamist's near enemy, the regimes of the Middle East, had implemented a strategy to crack down on the militant movements. While some did so out of survival, others did so due to the increasing pressure placed on them by the United States.

Beyond suppression, another strategy employed by these governments was to co-opt the movements through incorporating their leaders and members into the state's educational system or the government bureaucracy. A second factor working against the Islamists was that the birthrate in Muslim countries in the 1990s fell off, which, in turn led to a decrease in the number of potential recruits available to these movements. A third cause for the decline was the failure of the first Islamist utopia, Iran, to achieve all that it had originally promised. Iran was trumpeted as the beacon of hope during the movement's ascendancy and as such it was equally as powerful a symbol of its failure when two decades had passed and Iran, a country primarily ruled by a religious hierarchy proved to be politically bankrupt^[13] The low cost of oil had a negative effect as well. Many Islamist organizations received their support from oil rich countries such as Saudi Arabia. As long as the cost of oil hovered around \$30 a barrel, these regimes had a difficult time supporting the policies they implemented as a means of placating their populations let alone having the funds available to support the Islamist organizations abroad (though oil prices have since more than doubled.) A fifth factor was that *ulema* throughout the region began to "fight back" with their own message. Attacks perpetrated by some Islamist groups against fellow Muslims as well as non-Muslims, women and children violated the sensibilities of the majority of the Muslim population and as such these movements began to be perceived as a threat to society by the public at large.

For all of these reasons the Islamist movement's message no longer resonated as it once had. Kepel argues that, "the attack on the United States was a desperate symbol of the isolation, fragmentation, and decline of the Islamist movement, not a sign of its strength and irrepressible might."^[14] In fact, in 1994, Roy predicted that Islamism would "neither unify the Muslim world nor change the balance of power in the Middle East."^[15] He believed Islamic fundamentalism is primarily an opposition movement. Islamists do not have a set of tenets or principles to underpin their message or guide them if ever they assumed power. It is significantly easier to come out and rail in opposition to the policies being implemented by those in power. It is quite another to be the ones responsible for the implementing.

Bin Laden and his lieutenants got exactly what they hoped for when they chose to go forward with the 9/11 attacks. Following the attacks, the United States enjoyed unprecedented cooperation in hunting bin Laden's al-Qaeda:

"Soon after September 11 Muslim governments, including Sudan, Syria, Libya, and even Iran, which were not on good terms with the United States, pursued Al Qaeda diligently and aggressively, according to American intelligence officials; they had a vital interest in neutralizing Al Qaeda because they felt directly threatened by the militant network. Bin Laden and Zawahiri, as former associates point out, succeeded in uniting the world, including the ummah, against their global jihad."^[16]

The "honeymoon" ended however when the United States expanded the "Global War on Terror" by invading Iraq. This one act validated the accusation leveled against the United States by bin Laden that it was not the exemplar of democracy but rather the oppressor of the Muslim world. Iraq became a symbol of what the United States truly stood for, a training ground for jihadis bent on spreading the Islamist ideology. It also became a recruiting tool that could be referred back to in propaganda distributed by the movement.

A message that once held little sway with the Muslim population beyond its most hard core fanatics now gained traction with even the most moderate portions of the community. "America's imperial endeavor [invading Iraq] has given them [Al Qaeda] a new opening to make inroads, if not into mainstream hearts and minds, into a large pool of outraged Muslims from the Middle East and elsewhere and uprooted young European-born Muslims who want to resist what they perceive as the U.S.-British onslaught on their coreligionists."^[17] In doing so, the United States revived a declining organization that had already failed in targeting the near enemy (the apostate regimes of the region). Gerges goes on to say that, "[t]he United States is fighting the wrong war,

one that has overlooked the imperative of nourishing and consolidating, not exacerbating further, coalitions and alliances with Muslim social and political forces that could hammer a final deadly nail in the coffin of Al Qaeda and its global jihad ideology.”[18] As evidence of this theory, according to the Brookings Institution’s *Iraq Index*, the number of daily attacks has gone up each of the first three years that figures have been assessed:

- 2003 (July to December): Total Attacks—142; Average/Month—21.7.
- 2004: Total Attacks—783; Average/Month—65.3.
- 2005: Total Attacks—855; Average/Month—71.3.[19]

This crisis has the potential to grow well beyond Iraq if history is any indicator. Today the United States and the world are experiencing what happens when a blind eye is turned to the region as it did in Afghanistan in the Nineties. While the birth of the jihadi movement may lie with such icons as Qutb and Mawdudi, the jihadi movement and Al Qaeda are children of the Afghan War and it’s aftereffects. With the removal of the Soviet threat, America decided that U.S. national interests were no longer in jeopardy in Afghanistan and left as well. This led to a civil war that provided jihadis with a greater education in insurgency and a radical form of Islam that gave birth to the Taliban. In the Eighties and Nineties jihadi veterans of the war in Afghanistan had moved on to other conflicts such as Chechnya and Bosnia. In response to the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and its threatening position vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia, bin Laden even offered the services of an Islamist army to the Saudi defense minister, as protection against the Iraqi threat, if the Saudi government would rescind its acceptance of the United States’ forces[20] The 2003 war in Iraq and the resultant U.S. occupation has the same potential to result in a future blowback effect. “The bleed out” of hundreds of thousands of Iraq-trained jihadis back to their home countries throughout the Middle East and Western Europe” is of great concern to U.S. administration officials.”[21]

Once the current conflict in Iraq is decided (and even if it is not), the Islamists will eventually look elsewhere and while the likely targets for a new front remain in the Middle East, portions of the movement may return to their homes in Europe or America to continue the fight there. Zarqawi gives insight into Al Qaeda’s plans for the future with statements such as: “We are fighting in Iraq but our sights are on other places, like Jerusalem.”[22] The ever increasing likelihood of a civil war between Iraqi Sunnis and Shi’ites combined with the training ground and recruiting propaganda Iraq is providing the new generation of jihadis all seem eerily similar to Al Qaeda’s formative years following the end of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1989.

De-Ba’athification and the Iraqi Insurgency

The policy to de-Ba’athify the Iraqi government was another example of a poor decision made by the United States in the democratization process that is now encouraging growth in the insurgency. The policy led to over 350,000 more Iraqis being unemployed at a time when the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had no strategy to ameliorate the problem. Many Iraqis saw this as “unjust punishment, as many had joined the Ba’ath Party merely to secure a government job or a place in the armed forces.”[23]

This policy was also perceived as unfair in that it affected Sunnis more than other segments of the population. The Sunnis were already experiencing feelings of disassociation with the democracy being built due to their association with the Ba’ath Party and their minority status.[24] De-Ba’athification was seen as confirming the perception that Sunnis weren’t a vital part of the process. Natsios writes that ownership in the process is “perhaps the most important” principle of development while both the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ (CSIS)/Association of the United States Army’s (AUSA) Post-Conflict Reconstruction Task Framework as well as the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization’s (O CRS) Post-Conflict Reconstruction Essential Tasks documents list “Governance and Participation” as one of their key pillars.[25]

The importance of Sunni buy-in in the democratization process therefore cannot be overstated in its relation to the growth of the insurgent movement. One of Lipset's two causes of a crisis of legitimacy is when all groups are not a part of the political process from the outset of the transition[26] The reason for this is that if citizens feel they have a voice in how they are governed they will be more likely to view that government as legitimate and therefore support its policies as opposed to revolting against them when they don't. The wholesale nature of the de-Ba'athification of the Iraqi government served to eradicate any legitimacy the Sunni community could have felt in the early stages of the rebuilding effort.

With no options available to them, many in the Sunni community, whether they were Ba'athists or not, many turned to the insurgent movement as a means of regaining the status and honor that the United States and the Shi'ites had taken from them. Gerges says that the Shi'ites have become the primary target for Sunni insurgent groups such as Zarqawi's Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers[27] Policies such as de-Ba'athification only give traction to movements such as Zarqawi's because they confirm belief structures such as the idea that Sunnis are true Muslims while Shi'ites are not or more recently that the Shi'ites are collaborators with the United States in its attempt to conquer the region.

Beyond the statistical proof shown above by the Brookings Institute's Iraq Index, the radicalization of the Sunni population in Iraq is made clear by the fact that Al Qaeda in Iraq now boasts of the fact that it has recruited enough Iraqi Sunnis to form an all-Iraqi suicide squad[28] While Gerges feels that the United States' presence in Iraq is the driving force behind the willingness of Sunnis to join such a unit, it is also likely that policies such as de-Ba'athification, played a role. Combine that with the fact that former members of the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) are also the experts behind the improvised explosive device (IED) and the Sunni militancy operates the two most powerful insurgency tools available to date. Former UN weapons inspector, Scott Ritter says that the IIS' team in charge of IED development "provided 'the blueprints of the postwar insurgency that the United States now faces in Iraq.'"[29] To understand the extent of growth of the insurgency one need only refer to the number of IED attacks the coalition forces have endured over the last two years. "According to Central Command, in 2004 there were 5,607 IED attacks; in 2005, there were 10,953."[30]

A ripple effect of the problem of a Sunni insurgency is the fact that it reopens centuries-old wounds between the Sunni and Shi'ite populations. This can be seen in the recent bombing of the Al-Askariya shrine in Samarra by Sunni militants and the subsequent response attacks on Sunni religious sights throughout Iraq by Shi'a. "The attack showed that Islamic sectarianism remains the greatest challenge to peace. It also highlighted the poor job America has done in trying to balance the interests of Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims in Iraq."[31]

At first the U.S. administration chose to ignore the problem of the rising violence as the work of foreign fighters. Eventually that proved to be an untenable position and the strategy evolved into "demand[ing] that Iraqis bury the hatchet and just get along." ... "On Tuesday [February 21, 2006], Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad publicly threatened the Shi'ite-dominated party that won the December parliamentary elections, saying that unless it formed national unity government that included Sunnis, it risked losing American financial assistance."[32] The United States must find a middle ground between its policies of avoidance and confrontation in order to make progress in bridging the current gap that exists between these two communities. That can begin by first coming to grips with the following understanding:

"Sunni identity is part and parcel of the ideology and politics of jihadi groups associated with Al Qaeda; the Taliban; militant Wahabis, a puritanical sectarian movement that emerged in the eighteenth century in modern Saudi Arabia; and the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist organization that appeared in Egypt in the 1920s and is associated with the rise of political Islam, especially in the Arab world. Anti-Shi'i violence is not just a strategic ploy used by Al Qaeda operatives, such as Abu

Musab al-Zarqawi, to create instability in Iraq and undermine Washington's plans for that country's future. It is a constituent part of the ideology of Sunni militancy." [33]

As evidenced by the United States' envoy's reaction to the sectarian violence surrounding the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, it is clear that this message has not yet been received in Washington's policy making circles.

The lack of understanding of this sectarian cleavage, on the part of American policy-makers, is further exacerbated by the United States' ignorance of its role in this dispute. "Sectarian feelings constitute an important dimension, and one to which the United States has not paid adequate attention, of the reaction in the Arab world and beyond to the United States' occupation of Iraq, especially among the burgeoning militant Sunni forces that are growing in prominence as the expression of Sunni frustration with the decline in Sunni power." [34] Iraq demonstrates, to Sunnis throughout the region and Iraq in particular, "the strength of the bond between America and the Shi'ite heretics," [35] a perception that has been exacerbated by policies such as de-Ba'athification.

Additionally, threatening the Shi'ites with refusal of American financial support brings to the forefront memories of the failure of the 1991 Shi'a uprising against the regime of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent massacres inflicted upon them, both of which, it is believed by the Shi'ite community, are a direct result of the United States' abandonment of them in their time of need. Threatening desertion is not what one does with an ally especially one that is "the central front on the war on terror ..." and "... an essential element in the long war against the ideology that breeds international terrorism" unless the alliance one is forming is an alliance in name only [36].

The "Enemy Combatant"

In 2002, the Bush Administration made the determination that members of both the Taliban and Al Qaeda, if captured, would be considered "enemy combatants."

"In a series of secret memorandums written earlier in the year, lawyers for the White House, the Pentagon, and the Justice Department had agreed that the prisoners had no rights under federal law or the Geneva Conventions. President Bush endorsed the finding, while declaring that the Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees were nevertheless to be treated in a manner consistent with the principles of the Geneva Conventions—as long as such treatment was also "consistent with military necessity." [37]

As Hersh puts it, it was vital that this determination take place. The Administration understood that this war would be fought like no other war before it. The United States' unrivaled military supremacy would not be nearly as potent a weapon in the "war on terror" as it had been in wars of the past. Gaining rapid access to timely intelligence was going to be the key in this war and the primary means the Administration knew to gain that information was through interrogation methods that could only take place if the people being interrogated were not covered either by U.S. civil rights or the Geneva Conventions.

In 2002 the United States began to imprison Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners that were captured in Afghanistan or elsewhere as a result of the "Global War on Terror" at the U.S. Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba (GITMO). As with the prisoners in Abu Ghraib in 2003, reports soon began to surface alleging that the GITMO detainees were being mistreated and in some cases tortured. As was seen in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the U.S. administration's image and credibility were called into question as several agencies criticized the situation at GITMO. In April of 2005, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly had this to say:

“The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights considers that, through its practices surrounding detentions at Guantánamo Bay, the United States Government has betrayed its own highest principles. Guantánamo Bay is not a “legal black hole”: international human rights law has at all times been fully applicable to all detainees and for those captured during now-ceased international armed conflict in Afghanistan, protection of certain rights may have been complemented by the provisions of international humanitarian law for the duration of that conflict.”[38]

Other agencies such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Human Rights Commission have all voiced their opposition to the GITMO and the United States’ policies regarding the treatment of detainees. Many critics both within the Muslim world and elsewhere have claimed that what the United States is engaging in at GITMO is torture. “One reason the White House is so helpless against the violence spawned by those Danish cartoons is that it has squandered so much of its moral standing at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.”[39] Condemnation of this policy was not limited to those outside of the U.S. government. Many present and former members of the military opposed the idea of placing these detainees in a category outside of the rule of either U.S. or international law because it undermined the credibility of the United States in the eyes of the world at a time when America was more dependent than ever on its friends and allies. Additionally, using “strategic interrogation” methods against these individuals opened U.S. military men and women up to the same type of treatment if captured at a later date.[40]

Again, the Bush Administration, in its zealous prosecution of the war on terror provided another example to the Muslim community of the United States acting in a way not in line with the principles and ideals for which it wants to be the symbol. Bin Laden and Zarqawi did not need to say a word. Scandals such as the photos from Abu Ghraib and the reports of prisoner abuse there and at GITMO spoke volumes about how Americans felt about Muslims and the Muslim world took notice. The evidence of the results of this rage is made clear by the following statistic: the year 2004 saw a 200% increase in the average number of monthly insurgent attacks experienced in Iraq over that seen in 2003 while 2005 experienced a marked increase as well[41] This increase is due in large part to the messages conveyed to the Muslim world by these decisions.

A second issue related to the decision to identify the Al Qaeda members captured by the United States in the war on terror as “enemy combatants” was the decision to expand the use of a rarely utilized CIA tool: rendition. In this context rendition is defined as the policy of taking suspects into U.S. custody and delivering them to a third party for interrogation and imprisonment without the prisoner ever spending time on American soil, and thus not being granted access to U.S. courts. This policy has evoked the outcry of human rights groups because it is alleged that current renditions are done to send suspected terrorists back to countries where interrogation and torture are one and the same as opposed to granting these prisoners the rights and protections afforded under U.S. or international law.

Beyond the violation of international law, as with the alleged torture being conducted at GITMO and Abu Ghraib, the policy of rendition, in many people’s minds violates what the United States espouses to stand for and undermines its image at a time when America needs all the friends and allies it can get. Hersch says that members of the intelligence community informed him of the use of rendition because they “were troubled by the program’s prima facie violation of the Geneva Conventions; their concern was that such activities, if exposed, would eviscerate the moral standing of the United States and expose American soldiers to retaliation.”[42] As with the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and GITMO, rendition opens up the United States to criticism that it cannot explain away and provides the insurgents and the members and leadership of Al Qaeda with the “cause” Galula explained was so vital to their success. The insurgents used that message to expand the violence being seen in Iraq and as a result approximately 2300 Americans and between 40,000 and 80,000 Iraqis have died[43].

Conclusion

"[T]he United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world."^[44] The policies derived from the NSS are based on lofty goals and American idealism that were born out of a belief that the United States, as the leader of the free world, has a moral imperative to assist all peoples of the world in their pursuit of freedom and democracy.

"[T]he United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them."^[45] In its attempts to fulfill its role as defender of these principles the Bush Administration has implemented some policies that have been wrong-headed from inception and their implementation has proven costly both to Americans and Iraqis. By adhering to a Lewisan view of Islam, the United States has damaged its image and relationships in the Middle East. It has led the American administration to view Islam as an obstacle to democracy in the region and as such to work with the new Iraqi government and others to marginalize any Islamic influence. This faulty reading of Islam and the region has blinded the Bush Administration to the historical cleavages between Sunnis and Shi'ites and as a result has threatened the very survival of the unity government Iraq needs to move forward. Finally, and potentially most importantly it drove our decision to invade Iraq at the expense of hunting down the senior leadership of Al Qaeda. A decision that not only enabled the Islamist movement's key transnational actor to not just survive but also provided it with a symbol of American imperialism as well as a recruiting and training ground with which to grow the movement and threaten America in the future.

America must move beyond this Orientalist perspective and toward a greater understanding of both the religious as well as the societal differences which comprise the mosaic that is the Muslim world. In other words the United States must start to actually walk the walk of being the example of that "City on the Hill." "The back-and-forth between the West and Islam, the challenging and the answering, the opening of certain rhetorical spaces and the closing of others: all this makes up the 'world politics' by which each side sets up situations, justifies actions, forecloses options, and presses alternatives on the other."^[46]

If America truly yearns for a blossoming of democracy and freedom across the world, the United States must move beyond the current "back-and-forth" that Said is referring to and work to break down the myths and perceptions that have plagued this relationship from the start. One way for that to happen is through a careful reexamination of the West's strategy for interacting with the Middle East and a radical shift in the policies employed by the United States in the region in general and in Iraq specifically. The current American strategy in the Middle East is the equivalent of building more prisons in order to fight crime: while it is one method for dealing with the problems of the region, it fails to identify or address the underlying causes of the "crime." Until there is a shift towards an understanding of what is causing movements such as the insurgency in Iraq, or Al Qaeda elsewhere, the United States will continue to be forced to act as the "global policeman" and the dream of others viewing America as the "City on the Hill" will remain just that—a dream.

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- Note:* A portion of the "De-Ba'athification and the Iraqi Insurgency" section comes from "A Democratic Iraq: Assessing the Past and Providing Recommendations for the Future," submitted by Major Davis during NS 3023.